

30,000 veterans are waiting in line for their first appointment with the VA, a problem that will only worsen with the growing numbers of returning service men and women. Despite this reality, the Republican budget for Fiscal Year 2007 cuts veterans health care by \$6 billion over the next five years.

In 1944, Congress enacted the original GI Bill of Rights, to honor the Greatest Generation—providing our returning troops with educational benefits, loans to buy a home and medical assistance. In each major military conflict since, we have honored the service of our soldiers through an improved GI bill.

I join my Democratic colleagues in supporting the New GI Bill for the 21st Century to strengthen benefits for our men and women in uniform today, and provide long overdue benefits for the veterans and military retirees who have already served. For those returning from the frontlines, we are continuing our efforts to fight to adequately invest in veterans' health care, including mental health care.

Veterans have earned our respect, whether they served during WWII, Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War or have recently returned from Iraq or Afghanistan. These veterans who fought on the battlefield for freedom and liberty should not have to fight their own government for the benefits they earned and deserve when they return home. Nor should they have to fear that their private information entrusted to the VA is at risk. It is crucial that we continue to increase our dedication to veterans by providing them the services promised to them and we must fulfill our obligations to those who have worn our nation's uniform with not just words, but with deeds.

The 75th anniversary of the Department of Veterans Affairs is an opportunity to salute our brave veterans and dedicated men and women who devote their careers to caring for them. Just as important, it is an opportunity for Congress to reaffirm both the responsibility and a moral obligation to provide the necessary healthcare, education, and disability benefits to meet the needs of all our veterans.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in recognizing the Department of Veterans Affairs, for its 75 years of service to America's veterans.

**HARRY BELAFONTE: ACTOR, SINGER, ACTIVIST, AND HUMANITARIAN**

**HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, July 28, 2006*

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Harold George Belafonte, the acknowledged "King of Calypso," and one of the most successful African American pop stars in history. His ingenious assimilation of folk and jazz, with an emphasis on African rhythms and third world theme allowed him to rise to unheard of popularity in the days before the advent of the civil rights era. His album "Calypso" was the first recording in the music industry to sell over one million copies. It set the standards and laid the groundwork that led to his winning the Grammy Award for lifetime achievement in 2000.

The son of Jamaican-born immigrants, Harry Belafonte was born on March 1, 1927, in Harlem, New York. Soon afterwards, his

mother sent him home to Jamaica, where he spent his formative years and early adolescence. His exposure to life on the island and all its variety has been a constant inspiration to him and became the reservoir of his cultural and artistic expression.

After serving in World War II, he returned to New York and became involved in the theater community of New York. His first Broadway musical, John Murray Anderson's "Almanac", won him the coveted Tony Award. The overwhelming success of Carmen Jones, the Oscar Hammerstein adaptation of Bizet's opera "Carmen", made him one of the most sought after African American actors in the history of Hollywood.

He won the Emmy Award for his performance in the television musical epic "Tonight with Belafonte." He is one of the nine winners of the 2006 Impact Award recipients by the AARP magazine. He was the first recipient of the Marcus Garvey Award for Lifetime Achievement in 2000, which created the tradition of honoring humanitarians in the Jamaican Film and Music Festival in the subsequent years. He was also the first to receive the Nelson Mandela Courage Award and was honored with the 1994 National Medal of Arts from President Clinton, as well as numerous other awards and honors. I am awed by the talent of this remarkable man. His success continues to be a great inspiration for African American artists.

Harry Belafonte is a pioneer as an actor and musician and he is equally a committed social activist. A close friend and confidante of Martin Luther King Jr., he was the driving force who mobilized the cultural and artistic community in support of Dr. King's work, leading to their financial support and their personal identification with the needs of the Civil Rights movement. Dr. King himself acknowledged Belafonte's contribution, "Belafonte's global popularity and his commitment to our cause is a key ingredient to the global struggle for freedom and a powerful tactical weapon in the civil rights movement here in America."

In 1987, he accepted the appointment as UNICEF's Goodwill Ambassador. The second American to hold this title, he continues to play a vital role in holding special concerts to raise funds and garner support for UNICEF programs, along with his assignments to UNICEF missions. In 1985, he assembled 45 top performers to record the song "We Are the World," raising millions of dollars for emergency aid in Africa.

In 1987, he created a historic symposium in Dakar, Senegal for the immunization of African children, the positive response to which has led to a successful campaign for the eradication of curable diseases among African children. In 1988, he performed a concert in Harare, Zimbabwe, to focus global attention on child survival and development in South African countries, especially those victimized by the apartheid war. In 1989, the U.S. Committee for the UNICEF honored him with the Danny Kaye Award, for his important contribution in service of the children of the world.

Seeing the effects of HIV/AIDS in South Africa firsthand, he launched the Harry & Julie Belafonte Fund for HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa using a U.S. \$100,000 honorarium from the Ronald McDonald House Charities' Award of Excellence. He received the award in 2000 in recognition of his humanitarian work.

Recently he was presented with the Black Entertainment Television (BET) Humanitarian

Award, which he dedicated to Malcolm X and Nelson Mandela, as well as to the poet soldiers of the civil rights activists such as Fannie Lou Hamer. "I had a mission to overthrow oppression," he said in his speech honoring social activists all over the world.

Harry Belafonte has been a harsh critic of U.S. foreign policy, opposing the embargo on Cuba, the war on Iraq, as well as condemning the Bush administration for refusing aid from Venezuela and Cuba in the aftermath of the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. He has taken a strong position against the spying on American citizens sanctioned by the USA PATRIOT Act and conducted by the Bush Administration outside of the law.

His calling President Bush as the "biggest terrorist in the world," has created controversy and made him unacceptable to some, but he shows little concern over the reaction to his words because he sees the need to speak the truth as he sees it.

He has called upon the American people to demand their constitutional rights from the government. Instead of spending billions of taxpayer dollars abroad in a needless war, he suggested that we should focus on reforming our broken social security and Medicare system to ensure social benefits for our citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to honor this remarkable man for all his achievements and for what he continues to do for civil rights and as a Goodwill Ambassador for UNICEF.

On behalf of all of us, and in recognition of Harry Belafonte's extraordinary career, I declare that:

(1) Harry Belafonte is as popular among White audiences as Black audiences, shattering the traditional divisions between Black and White music. Whether plaintive or rousing, the music of Harry Belafonte transforms the everyday lives, pain, and joy of the common people into songs that resonated with and inspired people of all nationalities, races, and classes.

(2) His multiracial appeal enhanced the movement toward racial equality and increased understanding and tolerance across racial boundaries during the Civil Rights movement.

(3) As a supporter of that Movement, he performed benefit concerts and provided additional financial support to causes led by his friend, Rev. Martin Luther King.

(4) His activism and search for justice extends beyond the borders of the U.S. as evidenced by his strong opposition to the apartheid system in South Africa as well as his contribution as a Goodwill Ambassador for the UNICEF.

(5) Harry Belafonte, at this point in his career, is an immensely respected and dazzling figure in American culture and is equally esteemed and admired as a fighter against injustice at home and abroad.

**WE MUST RESOLVE THE ETHIOPIA-ERITREA BORDER DISPUTE**

**HON. MARK R. KENNEDY**

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, July 28, 2006*

Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I return to the Floor today to call the attention of the House and the American people to what